

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SCS-03 SCA-01 L-03 H-01 CIAE-00
INR-07 NSAE-00 DHA-02 PA-01 PRS-01 USIA-06 /036 W
-----070712Z 066387 /11

R 061315Z MAY 77

FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3869

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: CASC, CGEN, PFOR

SUBJ: SITUATION REPORT: AMERICAN MISSIONARIES IN ETHIOPIA

REF: ADDIS ABABA 2610

SUMMARY: THE VARIOUS PROTESTANT MISSIONS IN ETHIOPIA MEET EVERY TWO WEEKS TO DISCUSS MATTERS OF MUTUAL INTEREST AND CONCERN. A CONS OFF HAS OCCASSIONALLY ATTENDED THESE MEETINGS AND HAS RECENTLY BEGUN REGULAR ATTENDANCE. AT SUCH A MEETING ON 3 MAY THE FOLLOWING INFO WAS IMPARTED, WHICH WE BELIEVE SHOULD BE OF INTEREST TO THE DEPT:

1. MOST OF THE 11 AMERICAN-BASED PROTESTANT MISSIONS IN ETHIOPIA ARE PLANNING RELATIVELY SHARP REDUCTIONS IN ACTIVITIES AND PERSONNEL OVER THE NEXT FEW MONTHS. THE CUTBACKS ARE BEING OCCASIONED NOT SO MUCH BY THREATS TO THE PHYSICAL SAFETY OF THE MISSIONARIES, ALTHOUGH THAT WAS THE PRIMARY CONSIDERATION IN SEVERAL RECENT EVACUATIONS AND IS CERTAINLY AN IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION IN PLANNING, BUT BY HARRASSMENT FROM LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND PEOPLE'S ASSOCIATIONS WHICH EFFECTIVELY HINDER THE MISSIONARIES IN DOING THEIR WORK, TEACHING, OPERATING CLINICS OR HOSPITALS, VETERINARY SERVICES, OR WHATEVER. THIS HARRASSMENT USUALLY TAKES THE FORM OF TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS, TEMPORARY DETENTIONS, INVENTORIES OF BOTH PERSONAL AND MISSION
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PROPERTY, THREATS TO ETHIOPIAN EMPLOYEES OF THE MISSION, SUDDEN DISCOVERY OF TAX OBLIGATIONS NOT PAID FOR YEARS, AND OTHER SIMILAR ACTIONS.

2. THE SUDAN INTERIOR MISSION (SIM), IS THE LARGEST MISSION IN ETHIOPIA, WITH ABOUT 265 PEOPLE (INCLUDING CHILDREN) OF WHICH 125 ARE AMCITS. SIM IS EXPERIENC-

ING VARYING DEGREES OF DIFFICULTIES WITH LOCAL AUTHORITIES AT MOST OF THEIR 29 STATIONS. PRESSURES ARE SUCH THAT THEY ARE CLOSING FIVE STATIONS IN GAMA GOFA PROVINCE AND ONE IN KAFFA PROVINCE IMMEDIATELY. THEY WILL BE COMPLETELY OUT OF GAMA GOFA PROVINCE BY THE END OF MAY AND EXPECT THAT THEY WILL FOLLOW SUIT IN KAFFA PROVINCE VERY SHORTLY. SIM HAS PLANS FOR EVACUATING ALL MISSION STATIONS NOT ACCESSIBLE BY ALL-WEATHER ROAD BY 31 JULY. THE MISSION DIRECTOR IS UNABLE TO PREDICT NOW EXACTLY HOW FAR THE AMERICAN COMPLEMENT WILL BE REDUCED, BUT IT WILL UNDOUBTEDLY BE AFFECTED SUBSTANTIALLY. SIM OPERATES ITS OWN PRIMARY SCHOOL FOR THE CHILDREN OF MISSION PERSONNEL, BUT WILL BE CLOSING IT THIS JUNE DUE TO THE DRAWDOWN. THE CHILDREN REMAINING WILL ATTEND THE GOOD SHEPHERD SCHOOL IN ADDIS WHICH IS OPERATED BY THE OTHER PROTESTANT MISSIONS.

3. THE CHRISTIAN MISSIONARY FELLOWSHIP (CMF) HAS ABANDONED ALL FOUR OF ITS MISSION STATIONS, WHICH WERE LOCATED IN WOLLEGA PROVINCE. THE DIRECTOR OF THE CMF PRIVATELY TOLD THE CONSOFF FOLLOWING THE MEETING THAT HE AND ALL CMF PERSONNEL WOULD BE OUT OF ETHIOPIA BY 7 MAY. UNTIL RECENTLY, THERE WERE 28 AMCITS WITH CMF.

4. THE AMERICAN MISSION (PRESBYTERIAN), WITH 45 ADULTS, POSTED IN SIX STATIONS ALONG THE SOUTHEAST EDGE OF ETHIOPIA, IS ALSO EXPERIENCING DIFFICULTIES AND PLANS TO REDUCE ITS MISSIONARY FORCE TO LESS THAN 20 ADULTS BY SEPT. THEY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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FEAR, AND ARE PLANNING FOR, AN EVEN GREATER REDUCTION.

5. THE BAPTIST MISSION OF ETHIOPIA (SOUTHERN BAPTIST) HAS ABOUT 30 AMCITS, INCLUDING CHILDREN, IN COUNTRY. NONE OF THEM ARE AT THEIR STATIONS, HOWEVER, AS THEY HAVE BEEN FORCED FROM THEM BY THE MILITARY ACTIVITY IN NORTHERN SHOA PROVINCE. THEY HAVE NO PLANS TO RETURN TO THE STATIONS ANY TIME SOON, AND WILL PROBABLY LEAVE ONLY A FEW PEOPLE IN ADDIS ABABA.

6. THE BAPTIST GENERAL CONFERENCE HAS 21 AMCITS INCLUDING CHILDREN IN THREE STATIONS, ALL FAIRLY CLOSE TO ADDIS. ONE OF THE STATIONS HAS BEEN INVENTORIED BY THE LOCAL FARMERS ASSOCIATION, ANOTHER HAS HAD VEHICLES CONFISCATED AND RECEIVED INSTRUCTIONS TO MAINTAIN AND FUEL THOSE VEHICLES AS REQUIRED, AND THE PEOPLE AT THE THIRD STATION WERE TOLD THAT THEY WERE NOT TO LEAVE THEIR MISSION AREA WITHOUT PERMISSION AND A GOOD REASON. ETHIOPIAN WORKERS AT ALL THREE STATIONS HAVE BEEN "RECRUITED" FOR MILITARY TRAINING.

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-----070712Z 066347 /11
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7. THE BAPTISTBIBLE FELLOWSHIP, WITH 10 AMCITS INCLUDING CHILDREN, HAS CEASED OPERATION AND ALL PERSONNEL WILL HAVE DEPARTED ETHIOPIA BY THE END OF JUNE.

8. THE FAITH MISSION OPERATED A CLINIC AND SCHOOL IN GAMA GOFA PROVINCE, MANNED BY TWO WOMEN. THEY WERE SUPPORTED FROM ADDIS BY ANOTHER MISSIONARY AND HIS FAMILY. THE TWO WOMEN HAVE BEEN WITHDRAWN FROM GAMA GOFA AND WILL RETURN TO THE U.S. THE MISSIONARY IN ADDIS WILL REMAIN TIL HIS SITUATION BECOMES UNBEARABLE.

9. THE RED SEA MISSION (NOT A U.S. ORGANIZATION), UNTIL LAST WEEK HAD A U.S. COUPLE AT A STATION IN ASSAB. THEY ARE LEAVING FOR MEDICAL REASONS AND WILL NOT RETURN. THE MISSION IS CLOSING TWO STATIONS ALONG THE COAST BECAUSE THE NURSES THERE HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT THEY CAN NO LONGER JOURNEY INTO THE DANAKIL TO CARE FOR THE NATIVES. THE ADDIS HQ'S OF THE MISSION IS CLOSING BECAUSE ITS PURPOSE WAS SUPPORTIVE.

10. THE SEVENTH DAY ADVENTISTS, WITH ABOUT 50 AMCITS, DO NOT PLAN ANY WITHDRAWAL AT THE PRESENT TIME. THEIR BIGGEST AND MOST IMPORTANT OPERATION (FOLLOWING THE GOVT-TAKEOVER OF THEIR HOSPITAL IN ADDIS), IS A VOCATIONAL TRAINING SCHOOL IN SHASHAMANE WHICH IS NOT BEING BOTHERED BY ANYONE.

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11. THE MENNONITE MISSION, WITH NEARLY 50 AMCITS, IS HAVING LABOR PROBLEMS AT ITS HOSPITAL IN NAZARETH AND ITS BOOKSTORE IN ADDIS. THEY HAVE NO PLANS FOR WITHDRAWAL BUT ARE STUDYING THE SITUATION TO SEE IF THEY SHOULD REPLACE PERSONNEL WHO ARE COMPLETING THEIR TOURS.

12. THE MISSIONARY AVIATION FELLOWSHIP (MAF), WITH NO AMCITS, FLIES SUPPORT FOR THE REMOTE STATIONS OF ALL PROTESTANT MISSIONS. IT WILL REDUCE FROM FIVE PLANES AND FIVE PILOTS TO TWO EACH BY THE END OF MAY. REASONS GIVEN ARE THE REDUCTION IN WORKLOAD WITH THE WITHDRAWAL OF MISSIONARIES FROM THE MORE REMOTE AREAS, AND ANTICIPATION OF PROBLEMS WITH THE ETHIOPIAN AUTHORITIES.

13. THE CHRISCHONA MISSION (SWISS-GERMAN - NO AMCITS), WHICH HAS BEEN HERE SINCE THE END OF THE LAST CENTURY, IS CLOSING OUT.

14. ALL THE MISSIONARIES (INCLUDING THE SEVERAL CATHOLICS) AGREE THAT IT IS THE APPARENT INTENTION OF THE ETHIOPIAN GOVT TO SO RESTRICT THE ACTIVITIES OF THE MISSIONS AND TO HARRASS THE PERSONNEL, TO THE POINT WHERE IT WILL BE IMPOSSIBLE -- OR AT LEAST FUTILE -- FOR THEM TO STAY. THE DIRECTOR OF SIM TOLD EMBOFFS THAT THERE WILL BE NO "20TH CENTURY MARTYRS" FROM AMONG HIS GROUP, AND IT APPEARS THAT MOST MISSIONARIES OF OTHER GROUPS ARE OF THE SAME MIND.

15. WE ARE MAINTAINING CLOSE CONTACT WITH ALL THE MISSIONARIES WHO HAVE EXPRESSED THEIR APPRECIATION FOR EMBASSY INTEREST AND CONCERN. THE MISSIONARIES, IN TURN, HAVE COOPERATED CLOSELY WITH US AS REQUIRED, AND KEEP US INFORMED OF EVENTS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE.

16. THE HOME OFFICE ADDRESSES AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS OF ALL THE U.S. - BASED MISSIONS MENTIONED ARE LISTED IN THE REFTEL.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: REPORTS, MISSIONARIES, POLITICAL SITUATION
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Copy: SINGLE
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Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977ADDIS02857
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
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From: ADDIS ABABA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
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Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 ADDIS ABABA 2610
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
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Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2622143
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SITUATION REPORT: AMERICAN MISSIONARIES IN ETHIOPIA
TAGS: CASC, CGEN, PFOR, ET, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/cecd8a99-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009